

Grandma's Farm

Developed by Jeanne Wall

Extending the Story: Integrating the Performing Arts and Learning

Objective/Goal:

This is a main experience that uses in-role characterization and imagination to make connections to literature.

Educational Impact:

- ✓ Connecting meaning and symbol
 - ✓ Vocabulary
 - ✓ Comprehension
 - ✓ Science and math
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Suggestions for use with the *Songs for Singing and Learning* CDs:

- ✓ "Down on Grandpa's Farm"
 - ✓ "Harvest Song"
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Materials Needed:

- ✓ Story book about a farm, such as *Mrs. Wishy-Washy's Farm* by Joy Cowley (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2003) or *Barn Dance* by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1986)
 - ✓ Simple costume pieces like an apron, hat or glasses for "Grandma"
 - ✓ Optional: apple shapes cut out of paper or foam, in a variety of colors
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Procedure and Process:

Use a character called "Grandma" to create lessons designed to dramatize going to a farm. This can be a farm at harvest time, with emphasis on picking harvest fruits, or a lesson designed to teach animal science that familiarizes children with farm animals. Grandma is a very versatile character. Children enjoy her and eagerly help her with her chores, whatever they are. Once you've established Grandma as a character, she can take the children on many adventures. She could be a character who

leads the children on many imaginary excursions such as going to the zoo or the beach.

Grandma is an example of you, the teacher, going into role. By changing into the character in front of the children and explaining the transition as you go along, you are inviting them to go along with the pretense. It is important not to try and deceive the children with elaborate disguises. For one thing, they are seldom fooled. It is also important that they see you both as the teacher and as the role you are playing. By allowing the teacher and the role to be visible at the same time, you are exposing the children to an important emergent literacy skill of connecting meaning and symbol. When you put on the apron and hat and pull your glasses down on your nose, you are cueing the children that you are now playing Grandma. These costume pieces along with the body language and vocal quality of the character create a visual code that means "Grandma." Other emergent literacy functions of this lesson include increasing vocabulary as well as comprehension of a subject that is new to the children.

The children don't change character, but are still involved with the dramatic play. These lessons could be done as a lead-in to a book or as a follow-up to a book. Two recommended books are *Mrs. Wishy Washy's Farm* by Joy Cowley and *Barn Dance* by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault, but there are many other books that can be used effectively.

Lesson: Harvest Time

Introduction

Sing "Down on Grandma's Farm" ("Down on Grandpa's Farm"). Ask the children for suggestions of farm animals as well as adjectives to describe them.

What color is your horse? Is it big or little? Is it a happy or sad pig?
[Explore more opposites]

Lead the children in clapping a steady beat while singing.

Tell the children:

*We are going to take an imaginary trip to visit Grandma on her farm.
Grandma needs help harvesting her apples and pumpkins. Would you help
her pick her apples and pumpkins?*



Describe the character changes they will see, as they meet Grandma.

Let me tell you some things about Grandma.

Because Grandma works a lot in the kitchen, she often wears an apron like this one. [Slip on apron, take glasses out of apron pocket]

Because Grandma is very old, she wears glasses like these. Her eyes aren't as strong as they used to be. [Put on glasses]

Because Grandma has worked so long in her garden, her back is a little bent like this [stoop over], and because Grandma often works outside, she wears a sun hat like this one. [Put on hat]

Right now I'm [your name]. I'm going to turn around, and I want you to count to 10. When I turn back, guess who I'm going to be? That's right. Count for me.

Main Experience

Using a character voice, become Grandma. (A *character voice* is one that is different from your real voice and is chosen to fit the character.)

Go around the circle and welcome each child to your farm. Remember your body and movement in your character; Grandma moves very slowly with her back a little hunched.

Hello, dear, I'm Grandma. It's so nice to meet you. I am glad you children have come to help me pick my apples. They are over in my orchard. If you stand up slowly, I'll show you where they are. Follow me.

Grandma's slow movement will control the children's movements.

To begin picking apples, move with the children to another part of the room. Choose the area in the room that will represent the orchard before starting the lesson. This allows you to be sure that the children will all be able to fit in the area comfortably.

The children follow behind Grandma until she has them in the area where she wants them, the orchard. Once there, demonstrate how to pick apples.

Create your own movement to represent picking apples. For example, reach up with one hand and curve your fingers as if around an apple. With one short twisting motion, pick it and place it in your pretend bag in your other hand, making a slight clapping sound. Alternate arms while picking the apples, giving a stretch to both sides. Expand the stretch, reaching up and diagonally to the side.

Don't forget the apples on the bottom of the trees!

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For this, the children reach down and away from the body. The children could also mime climbing ladders to reach the tops of the trees.

Good job, children! Let's place all our apples on this table right here.

All the children place their imaginary bags of apples on a table.

Now start picking pumpkins.

Now we have to pick my pumpkins.

Do pumpkins grow in trees? That's right. They grow in the pumpkin patch on vines close to the ground. Follow me, and I'll show you where they are.

Again, lead children to another predetermined area of the classroom.

Because they are heavy, we have to be careful when we lift them. We don't want to hurt our backs. I'll show you how Grandma does it. I bend my knees.

Reach down, making a large circle with your arms miming the shape of a large pumpkin. Pick up the pumpkin slowly.

I want to put them in a pile over here on this table.

All the children pick pumpkins and mime placing them on a table. After the children pick a pumpkin, lead them back to their circle.

Good work, children! I have a very special apple tree I'd like to show you. If you all sit down in a circle, I'll show you my rainbow apple tree. Everyone reach into the circle and shake the tree trunk. Shake, shake!

Grandma walks around the circle and drops apple shapes of all colors. The children will get excited and want to pick them up immediately, so Grandma can give a quick reminder to stay seated and keep shaking until all the apples are off the tree.

Down come the rainbow apples.

Grandma then asks the children one at a time to pick up a certain colored apple and put it in her bag. Once all apples are gathered, Grandma thanks the children for their help and invites them to come back to visit her again.

I'm going to turn around and ask you to count to 10 for me.

Now I'm Grandma, but when I turn back around, guess who I'm going to be. That's right, [your name]. Count for me.

Take off your character costume pieces.

Take off the character role and become yourself again.

Closure:

Ask the children to tell you about meeting Grandma, and what they did with her.

In a song about harvest, incorporate the picking movement that the children just did with Grandma. Teach them the rest of "Harvest Song" (to the tune of "Farmer in the Dell").

Everyone stand up and stretch your bodies up tall like a tree.

[Stand with arms held up overhead]

Like a tree, we have to keep our feet in one place. Our tree roots go into the ground. They can't move. Our branches can move in the wind. [Move arms back & forth above head]

The wind blows our branches one way, then the other way. [Bend side to side at the waist]

The wind can even blow our leaves off, floating them down slowly to the ground. [Demonstrate having hands float slowly to the ground]

Let's try that again.

The third time you lead these movements, start the song.